DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 391 047 CE 070 622

AUTHOR Hovey, Roy
TITLE Employer and Employee Roles in Workplace-Based Career Development: The Challenge of Change in the Workplace. Workforce Brief #6.
INSTITUTION National Alliance of Business, Inc., Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 7p.; For related documents, see ED 378 406-407, ED 380 555-556, ED 382 794, ED 384 776-777, ED 386 592, and CE 070 623-625. Product of the National Workforce Assistance Collaborative.
AVAILABLE FROM National Alliance of Business, Distribution, P.O. Box 501, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701 (25 copies: $7.75); or on the World Wide Web: http://www.psu.edu/institutes/nwac.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Annotated Bibliographies; *Career Development; *Cooperative Planning; *Corporate Education; *Employer Employee Relationship; Information Needs; *Information Sources; Program Development

ABSTRACT

To meet the challenge of a workplace shaped by technological change and global competition, employers and employees must identify their mutual interests in dealing with change and work together to plan career development programs that will benefit employers (by improving productivity and competitiveness) and employees (by enhancing their value in the labor market and their employability prospects). Among the steps that employers must take are the following: recognize the partnership between employers and employees in the struggle to stay competitive; provide timely, useful labor market information; provide job information that supports career planning; provide guidance/counseling services; and provide support for employees pursuing their career development plans. Employees must take the following actions: understand the employer-employee partnership and take responsibility for their role in the partnership; stay informed; clarify their motivations and expectations; engage in career planning; and make career development a continuous process. Employers and employees wishing to begin a work-based career development program should do the following: work together; assess their current situation; and seek outside help from local community colleges, trade associations, government agencies, the National Skill Standards Board, and/or other nonprofit organizations. (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 391 047

NATIONAL WORKFORCE ASSISTANCE COLLABORATIVE

WORKFORCE BRIEF #6

PREPARED BY THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESS

Employer and Employee Roles in Workplace-Based Career Development:

The Challenge of Change in the Workplace

> "The Company and the Unions mutually acknowledge their pride in the talents, abilities, creativity, and commitment of the Company's workforce. The parties share a vision of the work environment in which all employees are encouraged to develop their skills, abilities, and talents to the fullest extent possible and are furnished with every opportunity to take the initiative to do so. Such an environment will not only offer the maximum opportunity to employees to attain their employment goals, but will also lead to increased commitment by employees to devote their maximum energies to improving the Company's productivity and competitiveness. It is anticipated that this level of employee commitment will contribute significantly to marketplace success for the Company and to increased employment security for employees associated with such success."
>
> *– Memorandum of Understanding among AT&T, the Communications Workers of America, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 1986*

Introduction

There is no longer any such thing as a stable, secure workplace. Technological change and the opening of markets to worldwide competition make it impossible for businesses to survive very long doing the same work in the same way. Businesses must continuously provide new products or services to meet the changing requirements of customers who demand higher quality and more attention to their special needs. To meet these market expectations, businesses need to introduce new cost-saving or quality-raising technology or work processes.

Businesses' efforts to compete have changed the nature of the labor market. Factory production work, which used to require mostly low-skilled physical labor, has been changed so much by technology that employees often need Associate Degree-level skills to operate production lines. Service industries require more skills for customer relations than ever before – skills in analyzing customer needs, problem-solving, and negotiating. To pursue a career or even simply to maintain employment, employees must keep up with business changes by upgrading their skills on an on-going basis.

The challenge of workplace change may be unsettling to employers and employees. Workers who do not keep upgrading their skills will be left behind by workplace change – either in low-wage, dead-end jobs, or unemployed. Businesses that do not provide support and encouragement for employee skill upgrading will be outclassed by their more enlightened competitors.

To meet this challenge, both companies and their workforces must identify their mutual interests in dealing with change. Together they can plan career development programs that will produce big payoffs to everyone. Companies can improve their productivity and competitiveness through the increased skills of their workforces. Employees can enhance their value in the labor market and their employability prospects because they have more skills to offer.

This *Workplace Brief* will show:

- How employers can support their employees' skill upgrading by providing both assistance in career planning and training opportunities;

CE 070 622

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- How employees can enhance their employability prospects by preparing themselves for workplace change, making informed career choices, and pursuing necessary training; and
- What resources are available to help in setting up and running workplace-based career development programs.

What Employers Must Do

The scenario presented in this brief is definitely a "high road" to competitiveness. It is a long-term strategy that sees employers and employees as partners, and recognizes the value of investing in employee development. Employers must accept their responsibilities as partners. They must do their part to enhance their employees' career opportunities.

There are several ways employers should support their employees' career development efforts. They can:

- **Recognize the partnership between employers and employees in the struggle to stay competitive.** Research data showing few businesses implementing high performance work practices, limited business investment in training, and stable or declining wages in the face of increased productivity suggest that many employers prefer alternative courses of action – moving labor off-shore, creating virtual organizations, relying on new technology, and employing contingency workers – to creating productive employer-employee partnerships. Employers must recognize their interdependence with employees in meeting the challenge of change, and embrace employer-employee partnership as a critical component of competitiveness.
- **Provide timely, useful labor market information.** On their own, employees do not have access to sufficient information about changes in business plans and practices or about new employment trends and job skill requirements. Without this knowledge, employees cannot make career plans or prepare themselves for new job skill requirements. Employers should provide information about employment trends in their companies and industries, and about the skill needs required for future jobs.
- **Provide job information that supports career planning.** Employers should make sure that the employment trend and skill requirement information they provide is understandable and lends itself to career planning. Employers should clarify whether employees must progress through a sequence of courses, learning increasingly advanced or specialized skills, to pursue a specific career path. Employers should also make sure that employees understand the kinds of certifications, qualifying examinations, or other screening processes used to evaluate skill proficiency.
- **Provide guidance or counseling services.** Employers should help employees assess their skills, aptitudes, and interests and then relate these to labor market information about employment trends and skill requirements. They should provide employees with professional assistance in developing formal, written plans identifying career goals and the steps for achieving them. Sometimes supervisors can serve as career coaches to help do this, but often employees are reluctant to discuss their personal plans or educational deficiencies with their managers, so it may be more effective to use professional career counselors. Confidentiality, and the security it provides, are important.

  The time and money spent on professional counseling can be made up many times over by minimizing false starts, unrealistic choices, and abandoned training programs. Counselors can also provide stress and change management workshops, which will help employees adjust to the idea of taking responsibility for their futures.
- **Provide support for employees pursuing their career development plans.** Most employees will need help selecting appropriate training programs for gaining the skills they need in the most timely and cost-effective ways. Employers can support employees' efforts in a variety of ways. They can provide training themselves by:

> Motorola Corporation's education and training objectives:
>
> - Providing all employees with at least 5 days of job-relevant training and education per year.
> - Qualifying all employees with the job skills required by business plans.
> - Qualifying employees in the language, reading, and mathematics skills needed for their jobs and for higher-level training.

1) developing curricula and conducting classes for employees, 2) intensifying on-the-job training by assigning employees to job teams that mix experienced workers with inexperienced ones, and 3) providing skill tutoring.

Employers may also work with external training providers, sponsoring workshops and working with local trade schools or colleges to develop customized curricula directly linked to workplace requirements. Providing information and referral services about schools and other training opportunities is a more indirect way of supporting employees' career development. Whether the training is provided by the employer or an external provider, employers should help ensure the training provided is of high quality (e.g., qualified staff, well-designed curriculum, appropriate delivery methods).

Many employees need financial or other assistance to enroll in training. Employers can support employees by subsidizing tuition for local trade schools or community colleges, assisting with child care and transportation, or allowing some training to take place on company time. Employers can also provide facilities (like classroom space, computer access, and instructional materials) at the worksite so that training can be brought directly to employees.

> "Our message to employers is this: Look outside your company and change your view of your responsibilities for human resource development. Your old responsibilities were to select the best available applicants and to retain those you hired. Your new responsibilities must be to improve the way you organize work and to develop human resources in your community, your firm, and your nation."
>
> *– Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance, Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), U.S. Department of Labor, 1992*

What Employees Must Do

Employees, too, have a share in the partnership. They must take on most of the responsibility for managing the effects of workplace change on their lives and careers. They should:

- **Understand the partnership and take responsibility for their role in it.** Understanding the new partnership between employers and employees requires that employees take a realistic view of the inevitability of workplace change and recognize that it will affect them in significant ways. They cannot assume that change will pass them by or that they can be sheltered from it for very long. They cannot assume that they will "be taken care of" or that someone else will make all the adjustments for them. Employees have to take charge of their own lives and careers and make the effort to control the ways workplace change affects them.
- **Stay informed.** Employees must try to learn in advance about the kinds of changes coming to the workplace. They should get as much information as possible about employment trends and new skill requirements and the impact these changes will have on them.
- **Clarify their motivations and expectations.** Employees may choose to participate in career development programs for a number of reasons: employment security, increased wages, increased employability, and/or self-fulfillment. The best programs can support diverse motivations and expectations. They enable employees to more successfully pursue rewarding careers and develop confidence and self-esteem by helping participants recognize the value of their capabilities. To take full advantage of the opportunity, each employee has to answer for him or herself, "what's in it for me?"
- **Engage in career planning.** Employees need to assess their skill levels, aptitudes, and interests to see where the most likely job matches are for them and what training they need to qualify for new jobs. They need to select realistic career and associated personal development goals and make sound, achievable plans to pursue them. Their plans should account for any personal life style changes that switching careers or going back to school for training will require.
- **Do it!** Employees have to seek and take advantage of the opportunities change offers. They need to select the schools, on-the-job-training, or other instructional options that will provide needed skills, and then follow through on their plans for training and skill upgrading. This may

mean a long-term commitment to obtaining an academic degree, or a program with a number of shorter steps leading to special certifications or passing employers' testing or other selection standards.

- ❑ **Never stop.** Employees must continuously revisit, update, and supplement their training plans and programs. Workplace change never stops. As soon as an employee has qualified for a changed job by learning new skills, new technology or business conditions will begin changing the job again. Employees will have to adjust to on-going change with on-going self-assessment and on-going career planning and training.

- ❑ "I felt that having the opportunity to take this training...made me feel that [the company] was really making an investment in me as an employee. I would have to say that my motivation as an employee increased as a result of having the opportunity to participate in this training."
- ❑ "The training helped me understand the big picture. I now have a better understanding by taking this course of what others do and where I fit into the company."
- ❑ "The training really helped me improve my self-esteem and feelings of self worth. It helped to improve my attitiudes toward my job, the customers I serve, and the individuals with whom I work."

– Comments from participants in workplace-based training programs planned jointly by management and workers, Alliance for Employee Growth and Development

How To Begin

The "high road" to competitiveness is a long-term strategy with employers and employees serving as partners. Three simple steps can help employers and employees start the journey down this road:

- ✔ **Work together.** Management and workers must collaborate in establishing and operating workplace-based career development programs if they are to be successful. Cooperative procedures are more effective than top-down ones in getting employees into training programs and achieving results. Employees are more likely to "buy in" to programs that they help plan and run because they have some ownership in them. In fact, employee input into design improves the programs by drawing on the front-line experiences of the people who are actually doing the work, and who are likely to have insights that won't occur to management or consultants.

  If the workforce is represented by a union, it is essential to involve the union, from the very beginning, in discussing or planning programs for training employees to meet job skill standards. Unions can be very powerful allies and resources. They are very interested in enhancing the employability of their members and have a big stake in upgrading their members' skills. Joint union/management committees dealing with career development and training issues can make a very positive contribution to workplace-based training. Even if the workplace is not unionized, joint worker/management committees can still be formed to deal with training issues.
- ✔ **Assess the current situation.** Employers and employees should start by carefully analyzing the status of the career development program in their company. What supports, barriers, incentives, and disincentives are there for employees to enhance their skills? It is one thing to say people are a strategic asset, it is quite another to act on that belief through company (and union) policies and practices.

  The changes in employer-employee relations associated with an effective career development program strike at the heart of traditional management practices. Successful change requires visionary leadership in both management and labor. Both groups should visualize their ideal career development program, and what it would take to establish such a program in their company. The ability of management and labor to work through the assessment together should provide a pretty good gauge of how much work will be required to establish a career development program.
- ✔ **Seek outside help.** Many of the tactics and techniques in successful career development programs are best observed in large companies with resources for long-term investment. However, there are alternative resources that can help small and mid-sized employers set up and operate workplace-based career development programs. Some important resources are:
  - ➤ *Local community colleges.* Practically all community colleges have business and industry divisions or similar units which have been

set up to provide technical assistance in assessing business skill needs, designing and offering responsive training programs, and counseling employees on their personal career plans. These divisions have staff with expertise in analyzing companies' skill training needs and in assessing individual employees' aptitudes, interests, and skill levels using professionally-recognized testing and assessment instruments. They can also help design customized curricula and arrange for training courses to be delivered at the employer's worksite.

- *Trade associations.* Many trade associations are engaged in projecting the future of their industries and analyzing future skill needs. The American Electronics Association, for example, has published some very useful analyses and classifications of skills in its industry. Other trade associations have done or are doing similar work. This information can be extremely helpful in identifying and classifying business skill needs.
- *Government agencies.* The federal, and many state and local governments, actively support workforce development as a foundation for economic prosperity. The U.S. Department of Labor has funded pilot programs in states and communities to implement labor market information systems and one-stop career centers. Workplace literacy grants funded by the U.S. Department of Education have enabled many companies to set up the basic infrastructure for a career development program.
- *National Skill Standards Board.* A National Skills Standards Board (NSSB) has been established to coordinate projects, funded by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, that are classifying skills and developing national skill standards for American industries. NSSB can provide information to help both employers and employees plan skill development programs.
- *Other non-profit organizations.* There are a variety of other non-profit organizations that can serve as valuable resources for employers and employees creating career development programs. Community colleges, manufacturing extension centers and programs, literacy volunteers, and others supporting workforce and workplace development can serve as important resources.

"...all stakeholders have garnered positive outcomes. As a result of the program, workers have gained increased levels of self-esteem, higher productivity, and more opportunities for advancement. Businesses have gained a competitive edge through better communication with their workforce, increased on-line production, and decreased turnaround time. Through the program, the Union has gained more active members and provided better working conditions for their rank and file members."

– Margaret Boyter-Escalano, Director, Worker Education Program

Further information and assistance on the issues presented in this brief can be obtained from:

Resource Guide, National Workforce Assistance Collaborative – a listing of national and state membership organizations and program offices supporting workplace and workforce initiatives in employee training, labor-management relations, work restructuring, and workplace literacy.

Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance, U.S. Department of Labor, Secretary's Commission for Achieving Necessary Skills – a discussion of workforce educational and skill needs, proposed skill classifications, and employer-employee-educator roles in reskilling the American workforce.

Skill Standards Executive Kit, National Alliance of Business – a packaged set of materials providing information on skill standards.

Setting the Standard: A Handbook on Skill Standards for the High-Tech Industry, American Electronics Association – a good example of the classifications of one industry's jobs into job categories and the breakdown of skill needs and performance standards within jobs.

New Directions in Career Planning in the Workplace: Practical Strategies for Counselors, Jean M. Kummerow, ed.,

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is one example from the many quality non-profit organizations available to help small and mid-sized companies. CAEL's mission is to "expand life-long learning opportunities for adults. Through collaboration with educational institutions, industry, government, and labor, CAEL promotes learning as a tool to empower people and organizations." It does this by:

- ❑ Helping companies to identify their human resource needs and determine the effectiveness of current employee education and training programs.
- ❑ Advising employers how to build a more comprehensive and integrated education and training system to address the skill gaps of their workforce.
- ❑ Creating a network of local education providers to deliver services, beyond the company's own training programs, to employees.
- ❑ Acting as a "neutral broker" linking the learning needs and interests of employees, their employers' needs for skills and knowledge, and the capacity of educational providers.
- ❑ Working with each employer to develop a plan introducing the program to the workforce.
- ❑ Helping individuals within the education provider network to advise and build employees' confidence in their own ability to learn.
- ❑ Providing management and oversight responsibility to the program, where desired.

Consulting Psychologists' Press, Inc., Palo Alto, CA – how-to advice for making career counseling effective in the workplace.

Exploring Learning Options: A Workbook for Adults Returning to School, distributed by Alliance Plus, Somerset, New Jersey – practical advice for adults entering training programs or going back to school.

Employee Training Interview Guide: Judging the Quality and Effectiveness of Training Providers, National Workforce Assistance Collaborative – questions to ask, and answers to look for, when interviewing a training provider.

– Roy Hovey, The Alliance for Employee Growth and Development, 1995

The ***National Workforce Assistance Collaborative*** builds the capacity of the service providers working with small and mid-sized companies in order to help businesses adopt high-performance work practices, become more competitive, and ultimately advance the well-being of their employees. The Collaborative was created with a $650,000 cooperative agreement grant from the ***Department of Labor*** to the ***National Alliance of Business***. Current partners on the project include the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy at Pennsylvania State University, the Maryland Center for Quality and Productivity, and the National Labor-Management Association. The Collaborative provides assistance in four areas: employee training, labor-management relations, work restructuring, and workplace literacy. For more information on the Collaborative, contact Cathy Stewart at the National Alliance of Business, phone: 202/289-2915, fax: 202/289-1303, e-mail: NWAC@NAB.COM.

Bundles of 25 copies of this brief are available for $7.75 (includes postage and handling) by contacting the National Alliance of Business, Distribution, P.O. Box 501, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701, phone: 1-800-787-7788, fax: 301/206-9789, e-mail: INFO@NAB.COM. This brief can be downloaded from the Collaborative's world wide web home page (http://www.psu.edu/institutes/nwac).

R6029

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESS